

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1419
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Curious and Unusual Deaths

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CURIOUS AND UNUSUAL DEATHS

INTRODUCTION

To Mark Twain is attributed the unusual discovery that more persons die in bed than from riding on trains. However, one is interested in deaths from train wrecks for that is an unusual way to have one's life end. Our interest is centered about curious things. The more unusual it is the longer it is remembered.

The following pages contain a discussion of about 75 detailed cases and brief mention of nearly 170 other deaths and several close shaves. There are many celebrated examples that have been purposely omitted because they are probably already known to the reader or they are mentioned in other Little Blue Books. An example is "Jack the Ripper" and his victims, discussed in "Historic Crimes and Criminals."

These are the stories one reads with interest in the daily newspapers. In several cases they are "the inside story" that was not printed in the papers. The author of this Little Blue Book personally investigated some of the deaths as a newspaper reporter. Others were given publicity in various newspapers and periodicals.

A FEW CURIOUS INCIDENTS

One need not fear death from most of the causes mentioned under this head. They form but a microscopic minority of fatalities. Most of us, being orderly, will die in an orderly way. *It looked like murder.* Early one morning

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near a suburb of Chicago a youth was found in a field fatally wounded. He had been shot through the head by a .22 caliber rifle lying several feet from the body. He died without regaining consciousness and nothing was found about the body by which to identify him.

The wounded man lay near a fence and the soft plowed ground torn up about him led the authorities to suspect that there had been a struggle and that the young man might have been slain or accidentally killed in a scuffle over the gun.

A companion was sought. Upon re-examining the young man's clothing a telephone number was found written on his hat-band, although it was nearly obliterated by bloodstains. The number, a Chicago exchange, was called and it was found to be the home of a boy who had been missing overnight. The mother identified the body as that of her son. She said that he had left home early the morning before to go job hunting. But the gun was not his—the mother said her son had never owned a rifle.

When the newspapers published the story the owner of the gun, a friend of the dead youth, appeared before the police and explained that the gun had been borrowed by the young man who had decided to go rabbit hunting the afternoon before his death.

The death was then explained as an accidental discharge of the gun as the youth was dragging or pulling it through the fence. He had lain unconscious on the ground overnight. The

torn up ground was caused, it was thought, by the threshing about of the wounded man.

The Unidentified Man. Early one summer in a Kansas town the body of a man was found floating on the river. He was identified as a man who had applied at the government employment bureau for work a few days before. The father of this man was notified.

When the father arrived he was surprised to find his son, whom he believed to be dead, loafing about the railroad station. Upon hearing the story, the son decided that it might have been a second son who was found. A telegram to the second son's last address brought a response, however, and the authorities were forced to take another look at the body.

The corpse was badly decomposed, but still the authorities thought they recognized it as that of another man known to the police. He was buried in Potter's Field. Two months later the "dead" man was picked up by the police for vagrancy. Now the authorities do not know whom they buried.

The Clock That Never Ran Down. An interesting coincidence which has never been printed happened in a western town. A prominent citizen owned a clock which was highly prized by him as an antique. For years he took care of the clock, winding it himself and allowing no other hands to touch it. To the knowledge of his family the clock had not stopped in many years.

In his declining years he took sick and as he lay on his death bed the clock ran down.

Of his wife, children and all of his relatives assembled, no one knew how to wind the clock.

Finally a local jeweler was summoned who mastered the intricate mechanism of the old time piece and started the clock going again. Soon after the clock was wound, the first time by hands other than its owner's since it came into the family, the sick man died.

Swimming With a Corpse. - A rather gruesome episode happened in another town at a municipal swimming pool. A young man and a friend were swimming one hot summer afternoon when they heard a little girl say, "A boy dived in and didn't come up!"

A score of persons were swimming at the time and one might easily have lost track of a boy in the continually diving and splashing crowd in the small pool. But the girl insisted and about an hour after her first remark the words were carried to the manager of the pool.

The young man and his friend were in the dressing room but the manager approached them and asked if they would again don their bathing suits and search the pool for the body. He had no life guard on duty.

"There's a white saddle horse outside," the manager said, "and it might belong to someone who is in there—dead!"

The young man plunged into the pool, thinking that it was all nonsense. To his surprise he swam directly into the cold body.

Perhaps thirty or more people had been in and out of the pool during the time since the little girl's first remark and not one of them

had knowingly touched the drowned boy, nor knew they were swimming with a dead person.

Six Inches From Saving a Life. In the spring one year when waters were high a young man and two companions went canoeing. While they were in the middle of the river the canoe suddenly upset.

One of the young men, an expert swimmer, followed behind his two companions as they struck out for shore. When he arrived within a few yards of the shore he turned about and struck out after the canoe, to save it, his friends thought.

The swift current had carried the boat far down the river and when the young man reached the center of the stream, his companions observed that he was evidently in distress.

They secured a rope from a nearby house and rushed to a long bridge which crossed the river several hundred yards below where their companion was struggling. This they dropped down from the bridge.

The young man was nearly exhausted by the time the current carried him to the bridge and he extended his hand to grasp the rope. But it was six inches too short and the youth sank to his death.

Murders His Chum. Two youths at a southern university were close friends. One of them was in financial difficulties and he determined to turn bandit in order to secure enough money to continue school. He purchased a gun and

waited on a dark street for a victim to approach.

A man came along.

"Stick 'em up!" commanded the youth.

A struggle followed. Two shots were fired.

When the robber was captured he learned that he had slain his chum.

Feuds. Feuds are not uncommon, even in this day and age. A quarrel which had lasted for generations between the Lovato and Medina families at Dixon, New Mexico, flared up when the two families met at a country wedding dance. In a gun battle three of the Medina brothers were fatally wounded. Their victors, three Lovato brothers, were held on a murder charge.

In Crossett, Arkansas, two well known and highly respected citizens settled their differences in the good old southern way, by shooting it out at close range. The duel occurred in the heart of the city. Both men were killed and a bystander wounded in the neck. One man was said to have been paying too much attention to the wife of the other.

Miscellaneous Deaths and Escapes. In a southern town a youth became exhausted while swimming in a large pool. He sank to the bottom where he gave himself a push to the surface with his feet. When he reached the top he would shout, "Help!" and take a deep breath and repeat the process. After doing this several times he attracted the attention of the life guard who rescued him. His presence of mind saved his life.

A woman, 78 years old, wandered into a river one night and died of the shock. It was believed that she fell asleep while sitting on her front porch and was sleepwalking. She was found by a searching party.

At the Indianapolis speedway a man was once fatally injured in a race without knowing that he was seriously hurt. The timing wire which automatically registered the cars as they sped over it was broken by a car as it sped by the judges stand. The loose end flew up and slashed the neck of the driver of another car closely following the first. The intense excitement of the race caused the driver not to notice his injury until he was nearly exhausted from loss of blood. He died before aid could be administered.

A curious will was left by a woman of Los Angeles, California, bequeathing all her possessions to her dog. The strange document, containing many misspelled words, ran as follows:

Los Angeles, Cal.
Nov. 1, 1925.

In case of my death I leave all I possess or oghn, both real and persnel, to my dog, Dick, a lleuim setter, black and white. I naim Mrs. Ema Foster of 60 and Monte Viste as guardine and care taker of my dog dick, cats and chickens to be humanely disposed of.

In Dubuque, Iowa, a man 101 years old, died jumping after a toy balloon. He gave the balloon to his grandson as a Christmas gift. One afternoon the boy let it get away from him and the aged gentleman died from over-exertion as he jumped after it.

SOME MARTYRS

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the justification of dying for a cause. Robert Ingersoll once said that in preference to burning at the stake he would admit belief in any God. It is true that many lives have been sacrificed in the furthering of useless and trivial causes. For every martyr who has really contributed to the welfare of mankind there have been many who have given their lives for false ideals and in vain.

Martyrs to Science. Here listed are the names of men whose contributions to the human race are priceless and who died in learning the secrets of nature—they are the self-sacrificing research workers of medical science. The most important martyrs on the records of the New York Academy of Medicine and the Bureau of Medical Information will be given.

It has been at a great cost that science has enabled mankind to battle the parasites that cause fevers and plagues. Knowing that death was approaching many of these heroes continued their work until they were overcome. In 1900 Jesse W. Lazear, a member of the United States army yellow fever commission, volunteered to allow himself to be bitten by a mosquito to test the transmission of the disease. Dr. Lazear told of his symptoms on his death bed. James Carroll also subjected himself to the bite of the yellow fever mosquitoes in 1900 in Cuba. He died seven years later from lesions of the heart which were believed to have been induced from the disease.

In 1928 Hideyo Noguchi of Japan, a member of the Rockefeller foundation, died a martyr to his experimenting with yellow fever in Africa. He discovered the parasite of yellow fever and later contracted the disease.

Dr. Howard Taylor Ricketts of Chicago and Philadelphia died in Mexico from an attack of typhus fever in 1910. He was studying the disease and while in Mexico he proved that tabardillo, a Mexican fever was a manifestation of typhus fever and that it was transmitted by the body louse.

In 1927 Dr. Adrian Stokes of Ireland died in West Africa from the yellow fever while attached to the Rockefeller foundation and while studying the disease.

Two other fever victims were Thomas B. McClintock who died in Washington, D. C., of Rocky Mountain fever, a disease which he had been studying, in 1915, and Dr. Tito Carbone of Italy who died in 1904 of Maltese fever, the germ of which he had been studying.

Dr. William S. Halstead, an American surgeon, died from undermined health, the result of making tests on himself by injecting cocaine to demonstrate the principle of nerve blocking. He became addicted to the drug and ruined his health in breaking himself of the habit. Halstead was the creator of the modern method of local anesthesia. He died in 1922.

The most recent victim of his own experimenting was Dr. Joseph Goldberger, who died in January, 1929, of an unknown affliction. He had suffered from typhus fever, yellow fever

and dengue fever at various times while experimenting with these diseases. He was studying the dietary cause of pellagra when he died.

Roentgen or X-ray and radium experimenters have paid heavy toll with their lives for their research. In 1910 Mihran Krikar Kassablan of Philadelphia died from constant exposure to Roentgen-rays. Walter James Dodd of Boston, a pioneer Roentgenologist, died in 1916 of burns.

The inventor of the Caldwell liquid interrupter and other X-ray appliances, Dr. Eugene Wilson Caldwell of Savannah, Missouri, died in 1918 from repeated burns. M. Demenitroux, former aid of Professor and Mme. Curie, died in 1925 of the tortures of a disease contracted through radium experiments.

One of the most plucky X-ray surgeons who ever lived was Professor J. Bergonne of France, who died in 1925 of burns received in his Roentgen-ray experiments. Although the professor had both his right arm and left hand amputated at different times because of burns, he continued his experiments until he died. Bergonne invented the magnet which was used to extract bullets and shell fragments from wounded soldiers during the World War. He also was the inventor of an electric vibrator which was used with some success in treating shell-shocked veterans.

Negro Lynchings. It is undoubtedly true that innocent men have been victims of race hatred. These men are in a way unwilling martyrs. There is on record a case of a woman who deliberately made up a story that a Negro at-

tacked her, and identified an innocent man as the one who committed the imaginary crime.

The innocent Negro was transferred to the city jail, where he awaited trial. A mob was formed which stormed the jail and abducted him. The leaders of the mob, in order to inspire terror in the hearts of the black citizens of the community, suggested that the man be hung in front of a hotel in the very heart of the business district.

The Negro was saved by one of the sane individuals of the town, a judge, who arrived on the scene with three or four other men who were opposed to mob violence, just as the rope was being placed about the trembling Negro's neck.

The judge argued with the mob while his friends strategically surrounded the Negro. At a given signal the friends of the judge cut the rope and rushed the Negro into the hotel and out the back door. The judge and one or two others blocked the entrance until the escape had been made.

Later the Negro was taken secretly to another town. A few years later the woman's story was openly discredited and the Negro returned and lived the rest of his days unmolested among those who once threatened his life.

At the time, however, the sparks of race hatred so ignited the spirit of mob violence that race rioting was barely avoided and it did lead to the lynching of another Negro.

Two days after the attempted lynching a white janitor at a railroad station discovered a colored hobo sleeping early one morning in

the waiting room. The white man ordered him out. The Negro was an ugly character and he drew a razor and slashed the janitor several times about the neck and shoulders. The police arrested the Negro and took him to jail.

Although the white man's wounds were not serious, a jury was hastily paneled and a trial held that morning so that the Negro could be taken out of town before a mob could be assembled. By afternoon the Negro was sentenced to a term in the state penitentiary. He was taken to the railroad station and placed on a train.

The mob, hearing of the law's quick action, assembled and ran to the station. There they overpowered the deputies and the engineer of the train and dragged the Negro out of the coach. He was hanged on a telegraph pole in front of the station.

It is curious, that although the leaders of the mob could have been easily identified, no action was ever taken against them outside of the usual half-hearted "investigation." This happened more than 35 years ago.

Martyrs to Sport. There are other cases of unwilling, and perhaps foolish, martyrs. At the close of the Michigan deer hunting season in 1928 eight hunters had sacrificed their lives so that 4,000 deer could be killed.

The realm of sport has claimed other martyrs. Football and baseball casualties and deaths from over-exertion occur every year. An article in *Plain Talk* in 1928 declared that of 50 bare-knuckle prize fighters of by-gone years, 23 were champions, the average age of

death was 43.24 years—a time when most men are in their prime. The deaths of 35 could be traced either to punishment in the ring, excessive training or dissipation. Only two of these prize fighters died wealthy and six well-to-do, while 32 were poverty stricken at the time of their death.

In a list of 50 glove fighters, including 15 champions, the average age of death was 39.12 years. Two were wealthy and two died well-to-do, while 32 went to their graves penniless. Thirty-five died as a result of punishment in the ring, excessive training or dissipation.

A Near Martyr and a Peacemaker. A near martyr was the mayor of Cicero, Illinois, the home of gangsters and gunmen. Imagine his varied feelings one night when he found 12 sticks of dynamite planted under his front porch. A fuse an inch long was connected to the explosives. It had evidently spluttered out just before it reached the charge, thus saving the mayor and his family from death or serious injury.

Also in the category of curious martyrs was a mother of Ashland, Kentucky, who rushed out of her house to stop a quarrel between her two daughters and some of the neighbor's children. She dropped dead from heart trouble during the excitement.

SELF DESTRUCTION

Edgar Allan Poe deplored the fact that there was little originality shown by self-destructionists of his time. There are very few unusual methods of suicide. In America shooting one's

self is the favorite method, hanging is second and poisoning runs third. Jumping from high places and drowning are also common methods of those who take their own lives.

More men kill themselves than women. Men die violently by shooting or hanging. Poisoning is the favorite method used by women. As a rule, women select methods that will not mar their features.

Student Suicides. During the winter and spring of 1927 America was startled by an epidemic of a score of suicides among high school and college students in prominent institutions. Men and women, attending Princeton, Yale, University of Chicago, University of Illinois, and University of Wisconsin joined in the latest college craze of dying by their own hands.

Many newspapers attributed the suicides to "the growth of modern materialism." Education was decried but it cannot be said that education has been the cause of the somewhat common epidemics of suicides among Chinese and Japanese girls. It is also interesting to note that philosophers and scientists who are most pessimistic about a hereafter and who are the most materialistic do not contemplate self destruction.

One student found life not worth living, hollow, tawdry, a snare and a delusion. Another announced that he had done everything possible on this earth and he could see no reason for living longer. A third was interested in spiritualism, curious about the possibility of

communicating from "beyond." Three others simply killed themselves without telling why.

One of the latter three, a youth who wrapped a rope around his neck and hanged himself, had received a note from his parents that day taking him to task for overdrawing his bank account. In the other two cases it is presumed that curiosity played a large part—they wanted to know "what death was like."

A high school boy of Oakland, California, killed himself with a rifle. His mother ascribed the act to a mild reproof for a bad grade in deportment at school. He left an incoherent and muddled note which said he was shooting himself "to save his mother and sister from humiliation."

A sixteen-year-old student in a Washington, D. C., high school shot himself with a revolver. He was walking through the corridors of the school while classes were in session. A friend seeing him stopped him.

"Where are you going?" the friend asked.

"I'm going to hell!" the boy answered nonchalantly, drawing the revolver out of his pocket and blowing his brains out. His mother, teaching in a room nearby, heard the shot.

The United Press carried a dispatch to the effect that "the American student suicide movement has reached England," and cited the case of a Cambridge undergraduate who had hanged himself.

Figures compiled by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company showed that suicide among minors was not on the increase during the winter and spring of 1927. in spite of the suicide

epidemic. Two percent of the suicides during this time were among minors, while in 1926 the rate was five percent. The rate had been on a downward trend since 1900.

Between 15 and 20 years is the common age for minors to take their lives, according to the figures. The rate for girls is usually higher than for boys. During 1921, 1924, 1925 and 1926 the rate among boys was the highest.

However, there are still more suicides than murders in the United States. Even in the large cities, those of more than 100,000 population, in spite of gangsters and thugs, there were 16.3 suicides to 10.4 homicides in 1927 per 100,000 population. The moral of this is—watch yourself closer than you watch your neighbor if you expect to be murdered.

A Negro Suicide. Self destruction is an interesting phenomena of human nature. It is not common among other living animals. It is true that some insects practice it, but here it is a means of preservation of the species, It is martyrdom, rather than suicide.

Colored people declare that their race does not often indulge in self destruction. The writer recollects a case of a colored man's death that had all the earmarks of a suicide, although the coroner's jury didn't exactly call it such.

Stabbing and slashing one's throat is an unusual method of suicide in the present day. Leaving on the gas and drowning is far more common, even the rare occasion that someone throws himself in front of a train is more common than stabbing one's self. However, a cer-

tain colored man was found one morning in the basement of the store in which he had been working, half undressed lying in a pool of his own blood. His razor was clasped in his hand, indicating that he had cut his own throat.

His employer said that the man had been suffering from ill health and had been feeling downcast and despondent for several days. His colored friends insisted that the man did not commit suicide.

"Colored people never commit suicide," they declared.

So the coroner's jury obligingly turned in a verdict of: "Killed by hand or hands unknown."

Odd Cases of Suicide. Reasons for committing suicide are often most trivial. A man in Groveville, New Jersey, killed himself because his radio wouldn't function properly. He worked on it until late at night, then in disgust, he quit suddenly, ran out into his back yard and hanged himself.

On January 4, 1919, a disappointed lover ran amuck near Little Sioux, Iowa, and shot himself and five others to death in a farmhouse.

On March 14 of the same year a man, 46 years old, ended his life by leaping from the New York City side of the Manhattan Bridge. His suicide followed the unsuccessful attempt on January 23 of a sailor who jumped from the same bridge. The sailor suffered from immersion and a bruised back. New York prosecutes attempted suicide as a crime.

One winter a woman of the streets in a western town went to the river for the dreadful

purpose of committing suicide. Imagine her chagrin when, after having jumped in, she found the water only knee deep. She waded out and it is presumed that she is still managing to struggle along without dying.

In another town a parachute jumper who was barnstorming in that vicinity got acquainted with a young woman on Friday evening. The next day the two were married. On Sunday he was killed jumping from a plane. His "chute" was left dangling on the wing of the plane. A few days later a woman turned up who claimed to be his first wife. This made him a bigamist. Then another wife was heard from. This made the man a polygamist. One of the airplane mechanics then offered the suggestion that it might have been a suicide.

Disfiguring One's Self. We have mentioned above that women commit suicide by methods that will not spoil their looks. While it does not come under the heading of suicide there is an example of a young man who disfigured himself to avoid suspicion of a crime falling on him.

One morning his foster parents were made violently ill after eating oatmeal. The boy was not taken sick. The incident was reported to the police as an attempt upon the lives of the family.

The youth was questioned closely but nothing was learned that might have led the police to believe he was guilty of the poisoning.

A few weeks later the boy came home nearly blinded and his face badly burned with acid which he claimed was thrown by a man who

had passed him in another automobile as he drove the family car home from school.

This time the police questioned the youth more fully and the boy finally confessed that he had been experimenting with some chemicals. He decided to try a mild poison on his foster parents and he had placed it in the oatmeal.

When the police questioned him the first time he feared that he was suspected and so he had thrown the acid on himself to avert suspicion.

NEWSPAPER SENSATIONS

Hardly a fortnight goes by without a new sensation in the columns of the newspapers. Only a few of the more classical examples will be cited here and of these, only those dealing with death.

Famous Murders. The famous murders of recent years must only be mentioned briefly. To go into the subject in detail would require many volumes by itself.

The newspaper space given to murders and murder trials is tremendous. Concerning the Hall-Mills trial alone 5,000,000 words were written and sent from Somerville during the first eleven days of the trial. More than 200 newspapermen and newspaperwomen were interned in the New Jersey village for the duration of the trial.

On the first day 130,175 words were telegraphed in eight hours. Twenty-eight Western Union operators, sixty leased wires and the largest portable telegraph switchboard in the

world were used in the transmission of the news to papers. On the third floor of the courthouse an electric typewriter animated many others in newspaper offices all over the country.

Eight daily newspapers leased houses for the use of their "Somerville staffs." The *New York Daily News* had 16 men on the job and the *Daily Mirror* had 13. Both are tabloid newspapers.

Ten photographers, all that were allowed, were in the front line of the court room with their flashlights and cameras. Two motorcycles rushed the plates from the scene of the trial to the nearest rapid transit station to be carried to newspaper and syndicate offices in New York City.

It is estimated that 60,000,000 persons followed the trial through the news columns. Yes, the public is interested in murder.

A brief summary of some of the most sensational trials of the last decade will be given here.

Leopold-Loeb. Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb confessed to the slaying of Bobby Franks "for a thrill." They were given a life sentence in the Illinois state penitentiary.

The Shepherd Case. William D. Shepherd was accused of killing his ward, W. N. McClintock, by means of typhoid germs. He was acquitted.

Sacco-Vanzetti. Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were executed on August 23, 1927. They had been sentenced on scanty evidence in a muddled trial for a murder and holdup at South Braintree, Massachusetts. There was consider-

able agitation throughout the world at the time, as it was claimed that the men were being executed because they were "radicals." Sacco was an anarchist. The October 31, 1928, issue of *The Outlook* offers testimony which if true (and it appears quite authentic) would clear Vanzetti for one of the crimes for which he was convicted.

Snyder-Gray. Ruth Brown Snyder and Henry Judd Gray were executed for the killing of Mrs. Snyder's husband, Albert Snyder, editor of *Motorboating*.

Gerald Chapman. A "master mind" type of criminal executed for the murder of James Skelly during a mail robbery in New Britain, Connecticut. At one time he escaped from the federal penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia.

Hickman. A youth who kidnapped Marian Parker, 12 years old, and secured \$1,500 ransom from her father, a Los Angeles banker. Then he fiendishly murdered her, hacked off her legs and delivered the dead body to her parent. He was captured, he confessed and he was executed.

Hall-Mills. A mystery murder in which a minister, Mr. Hall, was killed in company with Mrs. Mills, a choir leader. The minister's wife was suspected. No one was convicted but the case was filled with details not often found outside the most thrilling detective stories.

Witches Make Whoopee. We will cite, also, a well known trial that had an odd background. It is the story of the murder, rather than the

trial itself which deserves mention in a collection of "Curious and Unusual Deaths."

This particular case is the "witch murder," as the papers called it, of York, Pennsylvania. It was interesting in that it throws light on superstitious practices which exist in a modern world.

The story of the murder was related by Wilbert Hess, who with John Blymyer and John Curry, was held for the slaying of Nelson D. Rehmeier.

The three men went to the home of Rehmeier who had been credited with practicing witchcraft, for the purpose of securing a lock of his hair with which to break a "spell" it was alleged he had cast over them.

Rehmeier appeared at a window in response to a knock at the door. Blymyer, who was also said to be a "witch," asked for a book, "My Lost Friend." When Rehmeier came to the door Blymyer seized him and hit him over the head with a piece of wood.

Blymyer then handed the block of wood to Hess who hit Rehmeier twice again. Curry took a halter that was nearby and tied the legs of the "witch" so that they could cut a lock of his hair. Rehmeier continued to struggle and so Blymyer, who must have been a tenderhearted person, floored him with a chair. Curry tied a rope around Rehmeier's neck.

"After the rope was pulled tight he stopped breathing," Hess said in his confession. "I guess he was dead."

The murderers set fire to the body and fled.

Trapped in a Cave. Another famous death in recent years, which was not a murder and yet was a newspaper sensation, was that of Floyd Collins, a cave explorer who was imprisoned in a Kentucky cave.

Collins was caught in Sand Cave, near Cave City, Kentucky, when a heavy boulder fell on his foot January 30, 1925. He was searching for a way into Mammoth Cave. All efforts to release him failed. He was dead when his body was reached on February 16. The remains were removed on April 23.

This chapter takes us into deep water. While speaking of newspaper sensations we might go on telling of marine disasters, deaths of trans-oceanic fliers, dirigible explosions, earthquakes, fire, flood, tornadoes and other occurrences (including husband killing) without end that have occupied newspaper headlines in years past. A line must be drawn somewhere.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

The reputed last words of noted men and women must be taken with a grain of salt. In many cases the men and women who uttered them have become so idealized in history that it is quite possible that they said nothing of the kind. The words may only be what a witness "thought" was said—or what someone else "thought" ought to be said. One can hardly believe all of them are true, but who is to say which ones are and which are not?

Dying Words of Brave Men and Women. In some cases, such as that of Sir Philip Sidney,

an English soldier, we have two "last words." Sir Sidney fell mortally wounded on the battlefield. He asked for a drink. As a soldier handed him a bottle of water, Sir Sidney's eyes fell on a comrade who was also dying. The man's eyes looked longingly at the water bottle. Sir Sidney handed the flask to his dying comrade with the words: "Thy necessity is greater than mine."

In another place we read that Sir Sidney's last words were: "I would not change my joy for the empire of the world!" Perhaps he said both. Such a man deserves credit for both of them.

No one has tried to speak humorously at death. At least no dying words of exactly humorous content have come down to us. Many of them have a tinge of the ludicrous and have a certain extravagance which is akin to humor, a few are attempts at bravado, but no one has conscientiously attempted to create belly-laughter among those who watched him die. No one wants to have people laughing at him when he is dying.

Sir Walter Raleigh's remarks as he was about to be beheaded comes the closest to being genuinely humorous. But they are only the words of a debonair man of the world and they are not an attempt to be funny, nor is it spontaneous humor. He said: "It matters little how the head lieth."

There are several similar examples given in the list below.

The bloody sixteenth, seventeenth and eight-

eenth centuries gave the world the best dying words. A few Roman emperors also contributed to our list.

Statesmen, Patriots and Others

"It is well."—George Washington.

"Then I am safe."—Oliver Cromwell.

"Independence forever."—John Adams.

"Long live anarchy! Farewell, mother!"—Nicola Sacco.

"It is the last of earth."—John Quincy Adams.

"I have endeavored to do my duty."—Taylor.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you will now consider your verdict!"—Lord Tenterden.

"To die for liberty is a pleasure and not a pain."—Marco Bozzaris.

"Let me die to the sounds of delicious music."—Mirabeau.

"Remorse! Remorse! Write it! Write it! Larger! Larger!"—John Randolph.

"Give Dayrolles a chair."—Lord Chesterfield.

Philosophers and Scientists.

"The artery ceases to beat."—Albrecht von Haller (a Swiss anatomist).

"Let the light enter."—Goethe.

"Refresh me with great thought."—Johann von Herder (German critic and poet).

"Taking a leap in the dark. O, mystery!"—Thomas Paine.

"I am taking a fearful leap in the dark."—Thomas Hobbes.

Preachers and Heretics.

"I have peace."—Charles Henry Parkhurst.

"I shall be happy."—Archbishop Sharp.

"What! Is there no bribing death?"—Cardinal Beaufort.

"My days are past as a shadow that returns not."—Richard Hooker.

"I want nothing and I am looking for nothing, but Heaven."—Philip Melanchthon.

"Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be put out."—Hugh Latimer to Nicholas Ridley (both burned at the stake as heretics).

Poets, Artists, Musicians and Writers.

"I must sleep now."—Lord Byron.

"I am about to die."—Samuel Johnson.

"I feel as if I were myself again."—Sir Walter Scott.

"Clasp my hand, my dear friend; I die!"—Count Vittorio Alfieri (Piedmontese poet).

"A dying man can do nothing easy."—Benjamin Franklin.

"My beautiful flowers, my lovely flowers."—Richter.

"I feel the desire growing over me."—John Keats.

"Let me hear those notes so long my solace and delight."—Mozart.

"We are all going to Heaven, and Van Dyke is of the company."—Thomas Gainsborough.

Kings and Emperors.

"Is this your fidelity?"—Nero to his servant.

"And this is death?"—George IV.

"An emperor should die standing."—Vespasian.

"Don't let poor Nellie starve."—Charles II.

"I thought that dying had been more difficult."—Louis XIV.

"Farewell, Livia, and ever remember our long union."—Augustus Caesar.

"I have seen all things, and all things are of little value."—Alexander Severus.

"*Et tu Brute?*"—(And you Brutus?)—Julius Caesar.

Soldiers and Sailors

"Don't give up the ship!"—James Lawrence.

"I would not change my joy for the empire of the world."—Sir Philip Sidney.

"I thank God I have done my duty."—Lord Nelson (killed in action at Trafalgar).

"It matters little how the head lieth."—Sir Walter Raleigh.

"James, take good care of the horse."—General Winfield Scott.

"We are as near Heaven by sea as by land."—Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

"This is the last flickering of a lamp that has long been burning."—General John Ellis Wool.

"Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."—Stonewall Jackson.

"I regret that I have but one life to give for my country."—Nathan Hale.

Brave Women

"I die through you!"—Joan of Arc to Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais.

"It is small, very small."—Anne Boleyn (alluding to her neck).

"I do not sleep. I wish to meet death awake."—Maria Teresa.

"O Liberty, Liberty! How many crimes are committed in thy name!"—Madam Roland (executed).

There is a story behind each one of those utterances. Those people died well, all of them.

The Raymond Schoolhouse. While we are on the subject of last words it might be well to mention the episode concerning S. N. Wood, one of the most conspicuous characters in the territorial history of Kansas, and the schoolhouse at Raymond, Kansas. It was one of the huge jokes of the day.

The Santa Fe railroad reached Hutchinson June 10, 1872, and from there it crossed the prairies to Great Bend and reached that town during July, 1872. Midway between Hutchinson and Great Bend is the site of Raymond, which was a town while the railroad was there.

Gamblers, dance hall girls and the riff-raff of the frontier settled at Raymond. Possibly a dozen persons really had legitimate businesses in the place while it was a town.

One morning a notice was placed (at the railroad station, presumably) in S. N. Wood's handwriting calling for an election of school bonds to build a schoolhouse!

On July 30, when the election was held there were about 300 persons in Raymond. On August 26, when 20 bonds of \$500 each were issued as a result of the election, the population of Raymond had dwindled to S. N. Wood and 24 others.

After a time Wood sold the bonds for \$750

each and, since he had the contract to build the schoolhouse, he pocketed the whole amount.

The contract called for a school with a "belfry and a good bell that could be heard for two miles." The records of the superintendent of Rice County schools are incomplete before 1885. However, the episode is mentioned in a footnote of Kansas Historical Collections, Volume XII, which declares that the district was 12 miles long and six miles wide—and the bell was good for only a two-mile radius.

The state legislature investigated the case in 1876 and found that no school had been built. Suit was brought against Wood and two banks which were used by Wood in disposing of the bonds, but the money was never procured.

Wood was killed in a gun battle over the location of a county-seat at Hugoton, Kansas, on June 23, 1891. His dying words were said to be: "I bind myself to build Raymond School District a house for school purposes, and I will place on it a bell which can be heard two miles down the Arkansas." It was quite a speech for a dying man to make.

MELODRAMA IN REAL LIFE—CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most melodramatic death in this entire collection is the one we have saved for the last. It is the tale of a girl in her teens who was madly in love with a railroad engineer.

They had gone together for two years. On days when he was away she would eagerly wait beside the tracks and watch for his return. As he passed by she would wave her handkerchief at him.

One day they had a quarrel, such as all lovers have. The engineer refused to make up with his sweetheart.

She waited by the tracks again for his return. The engineer saw her as he sped toward the town. But she did not wave her handkerchief at him this time. She had thrown herself in front of his train.

Conclusion. This, of course, is not an exhaustive study of interesting, unusual and curious deaths. Each day brings new and unusual tales of loss of life. The undertaker and the newspapers have an eye on all of us, for we may be the source of their next piece of merchandise.

We have omitted several cases of members of faith healing cults who died when they might have been saved, had they had a doctor. "What did people do before they had doctors?" the cultists inquire. Why, they died then, too.

Only a few conclusions may be made from the details gathered here. Unusual deaths are violent deaths (murders and suicides), as a rule, and they are deaths that might have been avoided. Of those mentioned in detail in this book about 50 percent are the fault of the person who died; about 40 percent are the result of someone else's carelessness or intention; about 10 percent were unavoidable.

Revoltng, disgusting and horrible deaths have been omitted. Only the most morbid persons would care to read them.

We might tell about the flour miller whose overalls caught in the machinery of his elevator—but we won't, we'll quit.



